

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, TS, MR, MO, AG, LY, TS

SUBJECT: MAGHREBIAN TRADE UNIONIST MEET IN TUNIS

1. REPRESENTATIVES OF TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS IN THE FIVE MAGHREB COUNTRIES (MAURITANIA, MOROCCO, ALGERIA, TUNISIA, AND LIBYA) HELD A PERIODIC MEETING IN THE SOUTHERN TUNISIAN CITY OF SFAX ON AUGUST 4 AND 5. DESCRIBED IN THE TUNIS PRESS AS THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF THE TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS OF MAGHREBIAN WORKERS, THE REPRESENTATIVES WERE MAA AL AINAINI, MAHJOUB BEN SADDIK, ABDELKADER BENIHOUS, HABIB ACHOUR, AND ABOUBAKER JALLOUD. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS THE FIVE MEET EVERY SIX MONTHS. THE LAST SESSION WAS HELD IN NOUAKCHOTT.

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2. THE FIVE MAGHREBIAN TRADE UNIONISTS PUBLISHED A BRIEF DECLARATION AT THE END OF THEIR MEETING IN WHICH THEY NOTED WITH PLEASURE THE HIGH LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION BY MAGHREBIAN WORKERS IN ACHIEVING THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE WORKING MASSES FOR TRADE UNION LIBERTIES, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, DEMOCRACY, PROGRESS, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE. THE FIVE MAGHREBIAN TRADE UNION

LEADERS CALLED FOR INCREASED PARTICIPATION BY THEIR ORGANIZATIONS IN THE ARAB TRADE UNION INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION. THEY CALLED AS WELL FOR AN END TO ALL FORMS OF IMPERIALISM AND RACISM AND EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR THE CAUSE OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. THE TRADE UNIONISTS URGED THE CREATION OF A NATIONAL STATE FOR THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN LIBERATED TERRITORIES OF PALESTINE AND REAFFIRMED SUPPORT FOR THE NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLES OF NAMIBIA, RHODESIA, SOUTH AFRICA, AND ERITREA.

3. ADDRESSING THEMSELVES TO MAGHREBIAN AFFAIRS, THE FIVE LEADERS CALLED FOR INCREASED TIES AMONG THEIR FIVE ORGANIZATIONS AND ANNOUNCED THAT THEY WOULD ORGANIZE CONFERENCES TO STUDY TRADE UNION HISTORY IN THE REGION AND THE MEANS TO UNIFY TRADE UNION ACTION IN THE MAGHREB. THEY PLEDGED THEMSELVES TO EXCHANGE TRADE UNION PUBLICATIONS AND OTHER INFORMATION ON THE DEFENSE OF WORKER RIGHTS. FINALLY, THEY DECIDED TO HOLD THEIR NEXT MEETING IN TRIPOLI IN JANUARY 1978.

4. UGTT SOURCES TOLD US THAT THE MAGHREBIAN TRADE UNION LEADERS HAVE BEEN MEETING INFORMALLY FOR ABOUT THREE YEARS, ROTATING FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER. THEIR DISCUSSIONS HAVE CONSISTED ONLY OF SHARING VIEWS AND THEY HAVE YET TO UNDERTAKE ANY COMMON PROGRAM OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ACTION. IF THEY ORGANIZE THE CONFERENCES CALLED FOR IN THEIR PUBLIC DECLARATION THIS WOULD BE A SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD IN THE CREATION OF A PERMANENT REGIONAL TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION AND WOULD CONSTITUTE A MINOR STEP FORWARD IN THE CAUSE OF MAGHREBIAN UNITY.

5. TUNISIAN TRADE UNION LEADER HABIB ACHOUR USED THE PRESENCE OF HIS MAGHREBIAN COLLEAGUES TO DRESS UP AN ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION HE STAGED IN SFAX OF A 1947 CLASH BETWEEN FRENCH COLONIAL AUTHORITIES AND THE BUDDING TUNISIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. SEVERAL TUNISIAN WERE KILLED IN THIS CLASH AND ACHOUR WAS WOUNDED BY GUNFIRE. AS WITH OTHER PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS ORGANIZED BY THE UGTT, THIS COMMEMORATION WAS DESIGNED TO DEMONSTRATE TRADE UNIONISM'S POWER AND INDEPENDENCE IN TUNISIA AND HABIB ACHOUR'S POLITICAL CLOUT. ACHOUR APPARENTLY ACHIEVED HIS OBJECTIVE WHILE USING HIS SPEECH AT A MASS RALLY TO PRESSURE THE GOVERNMENT INTO REVISING ITS CALCULATION OF THE COST-OF-LIVING INDEX.

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